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**LETTERS FROM HOOPA AND YUROK TRIBAL MEMBERS ASK CONGRESS
TO RESOLVE THE HOOPA/YUROK SETTLEMENT ACT**

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Hoopa, Calif. – The Hoopa Valley Tribe is concerned the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) has mismanaged a \$90 million trust fund from timber sales on their northern California reservation that has remained undistributed to Hupas and Yurok tribal members after 17 years of legislation, litigation and mediation regarding the Hoopa-Yurok Settlement Act (HYSA).

Clifford Lyle Marshall, the Chairman of the Hoopa Valley Tribe has asked Rep. Mike Thompson to request a disclosure of the status of the trust fund and support hearings before the House Committee on Resources. "There are many reasons to be concerned," said Marshall. "The federal budget is in a deficit status, the DOI is involved in a multi-billion dollar lawsuit about Indian trust fund mismanagement nationally, and at Hoopa the DOI has delayed reports to Congress so that it is becoming increasingly difficult to realistically discuss HYSA distribution legislation for this session of Congress."

Sen. Dianne Feinstein is not opposed to Congressional hearings, according to Marshall. Hoopa Valley Tribal councilmen have met with the senator and her staff to discuss ways to distribute the trust fund. "She's heard our concerns, and I think she's been fair," said Marshall.

Members of the Hoopa and Yurok tribes have asked their Congressional representatives to probe DOI for more about the status of the trust fund and begin Congressional action

on the issue. Tribal members have sent more than 850 letters to Senators Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, and Rep. Mike Thompson. “The House Resources Committee has shown an interest in holding hearings on the Hoopa-Yurok Settlement Act (HYSA), and we are asking our Congressional representatives to support this opportunity to finally open the door for Congressional action,” said Marshall. The Department of Interior has promised to release a list of options in July and these could be discussed at the hearing, according to Marshall.

The Hoopa-Yurok Settlement Act is the last fiscal remnant of the 1988 Congressional Act that split the Hoopa and Yurok reservations. The HYSA trust fund, generated from timber sales on the Hoopa Valley Reservation, has sat in a trust fund at the Department of Interior because the tribal governments cannot agree on a distribution formula. As of June 12, 2006 the amount of the trust fund is \$89,639,816.77.

The tribal councils cannot agree, but Native people in both tribes could use the money and would welcome a distribution formula from Congress, according to Marshall. “I have talked to many people in both tribes who are saying, ‘Enough is enough.’ Congress has got to end nearly two decades of litigation, mediation and legislation so we can give this money to Native people in the Hoopa and Yurok tribes,” said Marshall. “I know there are people who don’t even want to talk about ending this argument, but this money is not helping any Native people while it sits in the U.S. Treasury. It is futile to wait for all parties to agree.” Marshall said Congress has been unwilling to act on the HYSA until both tribes agreed on a distribution formula. “After 17 years it is time to admit that Congress has to step in and resolve this even though not everyone will like it.”

“It is rare constituencies agree totally about any legislation passed by Congress,” said Marshall. “Why should Indians be treated differently when they bring an issue to Congress? The 1988 Hoopa-Yurok Settlement Act did not enjoy a consensus among tribal members, but Congress courageously enacted correct public policy then. The 1988 legislation has proven beneficial to both tribes that now have autonomous reservations based on their ancestral homelands. “

The 1988 act created the two reservations and set aside trust fund monies from Hoopa timber receipts. The Yurok Tribe declined to take the monetary settlement and sued for a big federal damages award based on the Hoopa-Yurok Settlement Act. The Yurok legal challenge failed when the U.S. Supreme Court would not hear their appeal. For 17 years the courts, the Congress and the DOI worked unsuccessfully with the tribes to resolve the last fiscal part of the HYSA.

“Congress did the right thing in 1988. Now Congress has to pass legislation to do right thing again to write the last chapter of the HYSA,” said Marshall. He said a House Resources Committee hearing would be the beginning of a Congressional dialogue about an equitable distribution of the trust fund money. “Senator Feinstein has told me she thinks this issue needs to be resolved. I hope she, Senator Boxer and Rep. Thompson will support this hearing as a step towards a final legislative resolution.”